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UNITED STATES PERMANENT MISSION TO THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20520

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

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Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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Date: April 11, 1979

Participants: Dr. Arnaldo Listre, Minister Counselor
Argentine Mission to the OAS
Irving G. Tragen, Deputy US Permanent
Representative

Subject: Possible Early Election of the New IAHRC

Distribution: ARA - Ambassador Vaky
Dr. Guzman
ARA/ECA - Mr. Ruser

NSC - Mr. Pastor
HA - Mr. Schneider
Amembassy BUENOS AIRES

Dr. Listre phoned to ascertain the position which the US would take on the proposal to move up the election of the members of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC) from the IX OAS General Assembly scheduled for early November 1979 to the Special OAS General Assembly planned for next May.

Listre reported that the GOA favored the proposal and would not use the election as a pretext for delaying the IAHRC inspection visit to his country scheduled for May 26-June 9. Listre explained that the GOA position had evolved in a series of conversations with IAHRC member Tom Farer. Listre was concerned about internal conflicts in the present Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Carlos Alberto Dunshee de Abranches of Brazil. Listre commented that, even though an inspection conducted by Aguilar and Farer might uncover serious problems in Argentina, it would carry much more weight with the GOA and world public opinion than one conducted by Abranches. "An Abranches report of favorable developments in Argentina would be considered biased, while negative findings would tend to be discounted as only half truths;" this would not be the case with an Aguilar-Farer team.

Listre then pointed out that the IAHRC will be visiting Argentina next month and that the GOA would prefer a new Commission rather than the one which mishandled the Nicaraguan Report. Moreover, the current Commission is a lame duck body and its influence would be limited. He then stressed that the

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GOA was "at this very moment meeting to weigh the implications to Argentina of a decision by the General Committee not to elect a new Commission at an early date."

I reminded Listre of the Gentleman's Agreement last November in which Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela and the United States agreed to postpone the election of the new IAHRC in order to facilitate arrangements between the GOA and the IAHRC on the visit to Argentina. He assured me that Argentina no longer felt that we need be bound to this Gentleman's Agreement. I then told him that the US had no problem with the early election, but that we hope that a consensus would develop to avoid a division within the OAS on this issue.

Listre then asked me about the concerns of several countries about the elections, especially those expressed by the Jamaicans and Venezuelans. I urged him to contact these two delegations immediately and to try to explain to them the advantages of an early election.

COMMENT: The manifest concern of the Argentine Mission about the early election of a new IAHRC and the assurances of GOA determination to move ahead with the IAHRC inspection underline a linkage which had not been previously noted -- either here or in messages from Amembassy BUENOS AIRES. The Argentine and the Brazilian clashed sharply in the debate in the General Committee on April 11, and no consensus was reached. However, the Committee did vote favorably to recommend the early election of the new IAHRC by a vote of 17 for, 5 abstentions, and 3 non-participating; the abstentions, beside Brazil, were by pro-human rights countries (Venezuela, Jamaica, Grenada and Barbados -- Mexico refused to take part) who firmly believe the election is a ploy by Argentina to delay the IAHRC inspection visit.

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